



# NEWS RELEASE

## **USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT RECOGNIZES U. S. SENATOR JIM TALENT FOR ESTABLISHING THE VALUE ADDED PROGRAM**

United States Senator Jim Talent was recognized by Greg Branum, Missouri State Director for USDA-Rural Development, with a certificate of appreciation on Thursday, August 25, 2005. The presentation took place during Senator Talent's State-wide Agriculture Tour on which he highlighted the diversity of Missouri's agriculture.

"The certificate was in appreciation of Senator Talent's efforts to create and continued support of the USDA Value Added Producer Grant program administered by Rural Development," said Branum. "Missouri has received 37 grants totaling more than \$8 million as a result of the Senator's efforts. The program has assisted Missouri producers to increase their personal income by adding value to various commodities through processing, preserving identity, organic production and renewable energy projects and has helped create new jobs in Rural Missouri."

Senator Talent, a member of the U. S. Senate Agriculture Committee, first championed the value-added grant program when he served in the U. S. House of Representatives, persuading the House Agriculture Committee Chairman to include \$15 million in technical assistance grants in the *Agriculture Risk Protection Act of 2000*. Branum added, "I applaud his vision that this program would help create jobs and stimulate economic growth in Missouri's agriculture sector by helping our producers capture more of the consumer dollar by adding value to their commodities."

When he served in the U.S. House, Sen. Talent wrote the law establishing the value-added grant program to provide technical assistance to producers for value-added ventures, including engineering, legal services, applied research, scale production, business planning, marketing and market development.

"These Value Added Grants are critical to assisting America's farmers increase markets for their commodities and to increase their profitability," said Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Tom Dorr. "The foresight that Senator Talent had in crafting this type of legislation is reaping many rewards for farmers, businesses and rural communities. President Bush is committed to helping more rural families live the American Dream through the creation of new business ventures that employ more rural Americans. This program is a significant investment in the future of rural families and communities."

During 2004 Rural Development funded \$13.1 million projects nationwide with Missouri receiving \$1,043,306 million for seven different proposals ranging from working capital expenses for marketing identity preserved grain products, including white corn, food-grade yellow corn, blue corn, natto soybeans, tofu soybeans, and adzuki beans; to working capital expenses associated with expanding domestic and export markets for CAB kosher and non-hormone treated beef products; to a feasibility study, business plan and marketing plan for marketing soy flour to be used in premium soyfood products targeting health-conscious American consumers. Branum added, "Missouri was very fortunate to receive over one million of the thirteen million dollars or 12.5% of the national funds."

The Value-Added Producer Grant program is a highly competitive program that annually garners nearly 400 applications nationwide. Missouri had approximately 25 applications last year and was very fortunate to have seven selected for funding.

“The Value Added grants are an excellent example of the federal government assisting Missouri’s farmers increase markets for their commodities and to increase their profitability.” said Branum. “I commend Senator Talent’s leadership. These kinds of endeavors mirror President Bush’s initiatives and USDA Rural Development’s mission of being committed to the future of rural communities!”

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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